

RG Interview

IR: Tell me the types of digital devices you are familiar with and how often you use them.

RG: Smartphone and a laptop computer

IR: Which features, software, or applications do you use your mobile phone for?

RG: Well social media apps, banking, gaming and entertainment in my phone. I use Word and Excel, PDF and browsing in my laptop.

IR: So far how was the integration process for you? What does integration mean for you?

RG: I understand integration as learning the culture, the language, and of course being able to find a place for myself in the society.

IR: How do you use digital technologies in your everyday life? Have digital skills played a role in your integration process? If so, can you elaborate on how?

RG: Digital technologies are integral part of my day to day life. I use my phone everyday for many hours. And my laptop daily for few hours.

IR: Do you feel that digital technologies have helped or hindered your integration into Dutch society? Can you provide specific examples?

RG: Speaking for myself, digital technologies have helped me understand and adapt with things faster.

IR: How do you currently use digital technologies to access information about your rights and obligations as a refugee in the Netherlands?

RG: Rights and duties are mainly taught by government authorities while at the camp. In addition to that, personally I also rely on websites government organizations like the IND and municipality wherever your city is.

IR: Have you used any digital tools or resources to learn Dutch or other languages? How effective have these been?

RG: Yes, I have used language learning apps like Babbel and Duolingo and also websites to learn Dutch. These digital tools have been helpful in providing different language lessons, vocabulary practice, and pronunciation exercises. Videos and movies online also were helpful in

learning the language. They have been effective to some extent, but practice in real-life conversations is the best way to master the language.

IR: Have you encountered any challenges using digital technologies in the Netherlands, such as language barriers or lack of access to technology? If so, how have you overcome these challenges, if at all?

RG: Yes, I have faced some challenges. Everybody faces challenges actually. Especially when you are new. Language barrier makes it difficult to understand instructions, guidelines or navigate online websites or materials. Additionally, I sometimes struggle to find the right resources or to access the necessary technology.

IR: In what ways do you think digital skills and access to technology could be improved for refugees in the Netherlands?

RG: I believe preparing and delivering digital skills training according to the needs and levels of refugees would be beneficial. This could be a basic computer literacy, and guidance and instructions on how to use the main applications necessary to access different services on the Netherlands. In addition to that, making sure affordable and reliable access to digital technology and internet would be helpful.

IR: Do you use any online platforms or apps to connect with other refugees or people from your home country? How has this affected your sense of community and belonging in the Netherlands?

RG: Yes, I use social media apps like Facebook, WhatsApp and Telegram to connect with other refugees and people from Eritrea. My connection is mainly with people from Eritrea and Ethiopia. This helped me have a sense of community and belongingness. It really helped us to share experiences, to advice each other, and to provide emotional support to each other. Social media has also helped me build new friendships and feel less isolated in a new country.

IR: Have you had the opportunity to interact with Dutch people or participate in Dutch social events?

RG: Yes, I actually have this wonderful Dutch family. They were volunteers in a camp when I first came to this country. Since then it is like I have a mom and dad here. They live in Gorinchem. I have been to their house many times, they would invite me on holidays and events. They are so kind people. Apart from that, I don't have much connection or friendship with Dutch people. I should mention that language and cultural barriers sometimes make it difficult to fully engage and feel included with the Dutch society.

IR: Have you used any digital tools or platforms to connect with Dutch people or participate in Dutch social events?

RG: No, not much. But if it helps, I use WhatsApp to stay connected with the Dutch family I mentioned earlier.

IR: Now, let's discuss digital skills and employment. Have you been able to find employment since arriving in the Netherlands? If not, what are the challenges you face in finding a job?

RG: Well, I have been between jobs. All of them temporary, just to earn some money. At first, my desire was to pursue education. But that took some time to verify my education credentials and everything. I started taking short courses. The thing is you can find a job, like a job in a store a cafeteria or delivery. That may not be difficult once you get your BSN. The problem is getting a better job, I don't know if that is the right word. But I saw people with a degree or a masters degree and experiences having to work in a store or delivery. That is not good. I mean, qualifications should be recognized and accepted. In addition to that for people like me who want to continue the education track, the equivalency process should be easier to complete.

IR: Have you used any online platforms or resources to search for job opportunities?

RG: I apply on the websites of the organization, for example I applied on the Gorillas website when I was working in delivery. And Picnic website.

IR: Have you received any support or training to develop digital skills related to job search or job performance?

RG: No.

Have you used any digital tools or resources to help you navigate the Dutch system and access these services?

RG: Yes, I have utilized digital tools and resources to navigate the Dutch system and access basic services. Online government websites, informational videos, and translation tools have been helpful in understanding the procedures and requirements. Additionally, online platforms and forums where fellow refugees share information and experiences have provided valuable insights and guidance.

Do you feel that digital skills are important in accessing basic services in the Netherlands?

RG: Yeah, digital skills are necessary if not mandatory in accessing basic social services in the Netherlands. Many services, such as dealing with appointments, which is a very common thing as a refugee, submitting

applications, and accessing information, are predominantly done on the internet, on their websites or on their application. Without adequate digital skills, and ability to use the internet it is very challenging and hard to go through these things smoothly and access the services they needed.

IR: Have you faced any challenges in accessing basic services such as healthcare, education, or housing in the Netherlands?

RG: I think I did, not because I can't use the internet, thanks to Google Translate and Google maps but I have faced challenges due to unfamiliarity with the country's system. But the biggest challenge people from my country face is due to the digital difficulties.

IR: Have you had any opportunities to attend digital skills training programs or workshops in the Netherlands? If so, can you describe your experience and how it has benefited you?

RG: No, not really!

IR: What are some of the main challenges you have faced in accessing digital skills training or educational resources in the Netherlands?

RG: I think the main challenge is availability and access. If you are a proactive person and knows to look for opportunities by yourself, you can find trainings and courses. In fact, many free courses, including in Coursera

and LinkedIn. But, refugee oriented trainings by the, for example by IND or other entities working with refugees is missing.

IR: Are there any specific digital skills or areas of knowledge that you feel would be particularly valuable for your integration into Dutch society? Why?

RG: I can't say a single or a specific skill, but overall basic digital literacy is a must. Lets live it there.

IR: What kind of support or resources do you think would be beneficial in helping refugees like yourself in the Netherlands improve their digital skills and enhance their integration?

RG: I think, I think if you ask anyone from Eritrea, I swear this is what they would say: digital skills training programs. You have no idea how many people would come asking me how to do this and that, how to make appointments, how to submit an application. How to use email, how to see an email. So, I think trainings that take the diverse needs and levels of digital literacy among refugees would be highly beneficial. Additionally, creating social media groups or communities where refugees can connect with people who can guide and help them with their digital issues is also important.

IR: Is there anything else you would like to add or share about your experience with digital skills and integration?

RG: No man, thank you so much.